



*13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, **Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.** 15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.* (Matt 19:13-15)

Today's hymn is one of only two baptismal hymns provided in the 1940 Hymnal. It may reflect the Lenten spirit in its appeal for the benefits of Christ to attend every little child that is brought into His Church by loving parents - and those benefits were purchased at the end of the Lenten Season. We are reminded, too, that we are all but little children in the eyes of the Lord lacking understanding in many ways and subject to getting lost when our attentions wander. We must be as little children else we have no part in the Kingdom of Heaven. "*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Matt 18:3 (KJV) It should be further noted that those who exercise authority over little children bear a tremendous responsibility. "*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*" (Matt 18:6)

I have the distinct privilege on this coming Easter Even to baptize Noah Armistead Bordy Lane, the great grandson of our founding Bishop, James Parker Dees, and Rear Admiral Michael William Bordy. Both were leaders of men and women either in the church or on ships at sea. Their responsibilities were of no greater importance (except in scope) than that of two parents in rearing Godly and morally upright children. Today's hymn makes reference to that responsibility.

The lyrics to this hymn, in German, were written by Heinrich von Laufenburg in 1429, and has been translated into the English by Catherine Winkworth in 1869. The tune, St. Catherine, is the preferred tune and was composed by James G. Walton in 1864.

## O Jesus Christ, Lord Most Dear

O Jesus Christ, our Lord most dear,  
As Thou wast once an Infant here  
So give this child of Thine, we pray,  
Thy grace and blessing day by day.

*Refrain*

*O holy Jesus, Lord divine,  
We pray Thee guard this child of Thine.*

As in Thy heav'nly kingdom, Lord,  
Thy messengers obey Thy word,  
Send forth the succor of Thy might  
To shield this child both day and night.

*Refrain*

And all his life, let angels keep  
Him safe from harm, awake, asleep;  
May he not bear the cross in vain,  
But with Thy saints a crown attain.

*Refrain*

*O Jesus Christ, our Lord most dear, As Thou wast once an Infant here So give this child of Thine, we pray, Thy grace and blessing day by day* Truly Jesus did love, and does love, the little children. By presenting a child for baptism, the parents and God-parents are committing to raise the child in the grace and nurture of the Word of God. The child is unable to make a commitment, but by the parents commitment, the child is brought into a timely covenant relationship in the Church of God. At the age of understanding, the child must renew that commitment of his own volition at Confirmation. You may rest assured that any child "*set in the midst of Jesus*" will be granted blessing and grace.

*As in Thy heav'nly kingdom, Lord, Thy messengers obey Thy word, Send forth the succor of Thy might To shield this child both day and night.* My wife and I have seven children (four of whom are adopted). We love and care for our children, but we also love and care for every other child that comes under our influence. We consider that to be a God-given responsibility. We believe the mercy and grace of God, exercised by us, will cover our own children as well as others. We pray, too, that God will send Christian friends and witnesses to them when they are away from our own voice. We do believe that prayer uttered on behalf of a child is cherished and heard by the Lord on their behalf. We must pray, first for our own children, and secondly, for the children of our community, country, and the greater world beyond, that the Lord will send the Light of His Spirit to lighten their way and defend them from all evil.

*And all his life, let angels keep Him safe from harm, awake, asleep; May he not bear the cross in vain, But with Thy saints a crown attain.* The end of the parental responsibility that God envisioned at Eden was that the father and mother should teach their children daily so that the end of their lives are as close to God, and closer, than that of the innocent baby born at the beginning of it. Even our Lord grew in spirit and strength, and our own children must be provided with the environment to grow likewise, and the grace of God will dwell in his heart. *And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.* (Luke 2:40)

No one bears the cross of Christ in vain, but it is most profitable to begin the cross-bearing early in life so that much greater service is done over time for the Lord.

**Refrain**

*O holy Jesus, Lord divine, We pray Thee guard this child of Thine.* Herein lies the aim and object of baptism. By committing the child's soul to our Lord, protection from worldly excess and danger is invoked. Prayer, too, will cover and guard the child with God's providence.